

### In The Claims

Please add the following new claims.

*Sub C1*  
28. (New) ~~An interconnect structure comprising:~~  
a plurality of metal lines formed on a substrate;  
low-k dielectric structures interposed between two or more of said metal lines;  
a second dielectric material formed above said metal lines;  
a protective layer interposed between said low-k dielectric structures and said second dielectric material; and  
a conductive feature formed within said second dielectric material and said protective layer, said conductive feature in contact with at least one of said plurality of metal lines.

*B1*  
29. (New) The interconnect structure according to claim 28, wherein said protective layer includes dielectric material.

*Sub C2*  
30. (New) ~~The interconnect structure according to claim 28, further comprising a liner.~~

31. (New) The interconnect structure according to claim 30, wherein said liner comprises a material selected from the group consisting of titanium, titanium nitride, tantalum, tantalum nitride, aluminum, copper, and tungsten nitride.

32. (New) The interconnect structure according to claim 28, further comprising a spacer interposed between said low-k material and said conductive feature.

33. (New) The interconnect structure according to claim 28, further comprising a spacer interposed between said low-k material and a liner.